arises but rarely. Furthermore, if a daughter is required to perform similar duties for her father, she will undertake this obligation only with the lament: njɔ́y'ɔ́ɔna ɛ̌kf 'm wimɛ́kɛ́, "I have come to see where I had my origin." Any woman who has been in that position will later know no oath more sacred than this one: la botakɛ́ wɔ̌ fafɛ́ bɔ́kf 'm wɔ̌nɛ́kɛ́ la mpaka, "by my father's nakedness which I saw when he was old."

Thus we can draw the conclusion that the Nkundó are offended by nakedness and as a rule do not tolerate it. The exceptions do not invalidate this generalization; on the contrary, they tend to support it.

2. Speech. Obscenities and propriety.

In general the Nkundó see nothing wrong with using obscene expressions. They only describe them as "bad" if they become indecent.

If a conversation touches on matters of sex, they may wonder whether a particular topic is necessary, interesting, or entertaining; they will not ask themselves whether it is moral. For it will be apparent throughout this study they have no concept of morality strictly speaking.

The Nkundó possesses a varied and extensive list of obscene words -- nor is he alone in this respect. [56] We are not compiling a dictionary, and therefore we will not list them. What interests us are the circumstances that make these words indecent and under which a proper use of them impossible. The circumstances provide us with a criterion of the degree of obscenity of a word or expression. Let us say at once that we include in this category not only terms applied to organs and phenomena which are of a sexual nature strictly speaking, but also words pertaining to certain anatomical parts or physiological functions such as, for example, excretion, hair and tattooing found on private parts, and the female garment called efofa. We should also point out that some tribes will consider expressions obscene which do not shock others at all.

which do not shock others at all. (1)

1. These comments are applicable also to peoples in other parts of the world.

The general rule of decorum among the Nkundó permits the use of such terms only among equals. Their use when speaking to inferiors is tolerated but not approved of. The use of obscenities when speaking to any strangers meets with definite disapproval. Among persons of different sexes the prohibition is particularly strict.

Nevertheless, the use of these expressions is judged less severely if they are uttered in a moment of anger or as a reprimand, even in the presence of a member of the opposite sex.

Exclamations of anger, vexation, and sorrow are often nothing but obscenities (2). No one is shocked by them in such situations.

2. See "Les Coutumes Funéraires" [Funeral Customs], No. 1, to be published in Anthropos.

Some elderly or more modest persons do not make use of them, however; if the habit of using a particular expression is thoroughly ingrained, they may make a slight change in its pronunciation (as is common for some of our "swear words").

To circumvent the difficulties caused by the need to use certain words frequently, [50] euphemisms are coined to take their place. Thus the Nkundó say: ótswé lokako w'ékusa, "I am going behind the house," to indicate that they are going to urinate, and ótswé ŋgandá, "I am going for small pieces of firewood," or ótswé ótóa lokété, "I am going to pick a leaf," meaning that they are going to the toilet. On the way they say: ótswé kété, "I am leaving the path" or "I am going to the forest." A husband is permitted to use accurate terminology when speaking to his wife, but it is considered very improper for her to do so in speaking to him.

When someone is satisfying a natural need, others keep a distance away from him; they will not even speak to him. Moreover, the person would not reply even if he were called. A woman will not

518 shame of obscenities. They say: bikí ndovi éá bitóli é'ndómoto,
684 ndómoto ndé ndota (ittíé). "A woman is a ndota snake. Just as that
134 reptile twists through the grass and rolls up as soon as it sees a man approaching, so a woman finds it difficult to endure any obscenity."

The ideal way to be sure whether an expression is actually considered indecent is to check whether it may be used in the presence of a close relative, for a Nkundó never utters an obscenity in front of such a person.

185 Among the Nkundó, as in Europe, certain indelicate exclama-
578 tions are so deeply rooted that they seem to have lost their original
654 meaning, that is, most of the population no longer thinks of it at all. That a few more serious and modest individuals are still aware of it is apparent from the way they change the pronunciation of the terms in question.

Licentious expressions are never considered indecent and shock no one when they are uttered in a group or during group activities. [571] Such activities include communal fishing and hunting expeditions, [61] drinking parties, dances, funerals, and -- at the present time -- communal work on a road, a rest-house, etc.

Thus we see that in these matters there is a remarkable discretion side by side with a certain degree of tolerance, which may be carried quite far. Licentious remarks are not condemned in themselves, but only because of fortuitous circumstances, so we see that the Nkundó do not consider them from a moral point of view, as we do, but from a social one. But the fact that these are precisely the words which can become indecent and socially bad shows that the native sees in their content something shocking, shameful, some quality likely to give offense. The freedom exercised in certain cases does not alter this general conclusion but simply gives evidence of the inclinations of a pansionate nature.

3. Dances

535 Nkundó dances change periodically, as is the fashion in Europe. Old dances are given up after a time and are replaced by others which are newly invented or recently introduced. The dances fashionable at the present time came from the Bamongó, who are by

[32] husband will change to revulsion, and she will leave him to be with her charmer.

Part 3

The Search for a Wife

[34] When a young man old enough to marry believes he has the means to do so, he goes out to seek a wife. Naturally, he knows a number of girls, and as a rule he has no trouble finding one who suits him. The courtship is quite simple. As everywhere there are meet- [31] ings, visits, chats, and jokes, but there is no romanticism or sentimentality, for they are absolutely unknown to these peoples. Since they are in a hurry [103] to reach the objective of their relationship, namely conjugal life, -- and their progress toward this goal is facilitated by usages and customs -- there remains little time for poetry.

There is no specific term for courtship itself. The Nkundó simply speak of "talking with a woman," sasja bómoto, "looking for a woman," asa bómoto. The girl who is its object is referred to as bomótyó (or boomtó among the Inóngó).

First, the young man addresses his proposals to the girl: "ótanga tíkokótí (tíkokumbélo) la wátí", "I want to take you for wife." She shows her agreement by saying, "tíkotanga wé ngí tíkó", "I love you also," or more frequently, "otíkó ó wé", "as you wish," ótí ó lílé', "it's up to you," or something of this sort. (1)

[35] [37]

1. Note that for the Nkundó these expressions have quite a different significance than would appear from the words. They express a real agreement and an explicit and personal consent. In fact it is considered improper for a woman to use a more direct expression.

[34] [31] The lovers exchange gifts. The girl gives food which her mother has provided, or which she has been able to procure herself.

with a few vulgarities. If the woman goes beyond that, her husband gives her a good slap, but he cannot allow himself to exercise his muscles further upon her.

If a woman's tongue is too voluble and she permits herself to deliver gross insults without a suitable reason, her lack of respect is considered punishable. It is not considered proper to right this wrong by means of blows, however, although in practice impetuous young men do not always restrain themselves. The sanction preached by tribal wisdom is the man's abstention from food prepared by the guilty wife, and his refusal to perform the conjugal act. A Nkundó woman is very sensitive to such measures. If she is really recognized to be in the wrong and peace is not promptly re-established, the wife's family will beg the husband to calm down and offer him a lopolo, which may be as great as the value of a dog.

In the course of a quarrel a Nkundó woman may resort to a roundabout way of expressing her feelings; instead of cursing her husband directly she will address herself to a domestic animal which passes in front of her. The man is naturally not deceived, and the effect is identical.

What we have said applies to ordinary insults such as to wish a person's death, which may be expressed in the following ways: owé "drop dead," ekpí ékokumísé, "may a leopard get you"; nkwé ékokumísé, "may a snake bite you"; ótíkwé ó? "aren't you dying?"; okwa, "why don't you get sick"; bókokumísé nté ngélo, "may you be carried to the cemetery"; bókokumísé, "may you be buried." Insectives based on physical defects or designed to humiliate a man fall in the same category. For instance a woman may call her husband bololí or etolo, "a nobody," or imomolo, "idiot," or inyenyema, "brute," etc.

If, on the other hand, the woman in her volubility attacks her husband's parents, the matter becomes more serious. The Nkundó react very badly to verbal excesses directed toward them. Whether he is subject to teasing on their account or to insults such as "eat your mother (or father)," or to obscenities in relation to them, or whether the speaker "dishonors" deceased persons in evoking their memory. (1)

1. For the sake of documentation on Nkundó psychology and morals, here is the Latin text

of a few fashionable expressions: vulva matris tuae, comede matrem in clitoride, coi cum matre. The same expressions, mutatis mutandis, are used with reference to a person's father, brother, or sister. The expressions used for "disinterring" are oisondola lilongo, inf. nyangó, etc., that is, "exhume your family, father, mother, etc., or bojwó bíkí, "your corpses," that is, your deceased parents (this last expression especially excites a strong reaction).

the effect does not vary greatly. [275] The only difference is in the intensity of rage and of the reactions, which depends on the individual temperaments of the interested parties.

A Nkundó is greatly outraged by obscenities hurled at him by his wife, especially if she attacks him in public. His reaction is always violent. Usually it comes to blows, a thrashing, and sometimes the knife. But if the husband wants to remain within the limits of the law, he cannot injure or, more especially, kill his wife on his own authority. Before going any further, he must bring his case before the ndonga. His family if invited to the meeting and, if possible, so is the wife's father. The outraged husband presents his case and warns the persons assembled that one day his exasperation will lead him to take up the knife. Having taken his case before qualified persons, the husband can from then on go ahead and avenge himself for the disgraces his wife may inflict on him; it is lawful for him to do so. If the guilty woman starts again, no one can accuse her husband of wronging her, for she herself is at fault and he has warned her in accordance with all the rules of the law.

Modern young people do not always follow this procedure. But their revolutionary spirit often brings them reprimands and often gets them into great difficulties. The elders jealously guard their authority, and no one may reproach them for doing so. Therefore in a palaver of this sort, a father will sometimes forsake his son.